

P.X. Kelley, USMC (Ret.), chairman, American Battle Monuments Commission. The Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day proclama-

tion of May 26 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Telephone Remarks to the Rolling Thunder Ride for Freedom *May 30, 2004*

Thank you, Artie. It's great talking to you. I'm so pleased to speak to the members of Rolling Thunder as you attend the annual Ride for Freedom. I want to thank you for your leadership. You might tell them, Artie, that it was my honor to host you in the Oval Office—you and Mike Cobb and Gary Sheffmeyer and Jay Fairlamb and other special guests. I really appreciated you coming by to say hello.

I also received a letter from you last week, if you know, Artie. I thought you were going to offer me riding lessons—turned out you offered me Rolling Thunder's national endorsement for my reelection, and I want to thank you for your support. I'm really proud to have you stand by me—and the membership.

But more importantly, I appreciate the tremendous service that the members of Rolling Thunder perform on behalf of our veterans and active duty Armed Forces. I'm not surprised you're doing such good work because, like you, Artie, most are veterans. You understand the definition of sacrifice.

This weekend, as you mentioned, is Memorial Day, a day we honor the memory of the heroes who have fallen in battle. And I want to thank you for recognizing that, Artie, and I want to thank your vast membership for recognizing that as well.

I'm also calling to thank you because for 17 years you've worked to see that our war veterans are remembered, returned home, and reunited with their families. I know that your work and your persistence and your diligence means a lot to relatives all over our country who wonder about their loved one—the fate of their loved one. In

the Oval Office, I looked you in the eye as you told me about your relentless pursuit of finding out the plight of many of our POW/MIAs, and I appreciate so very much your concern, your care, and your persistence.

I also want to thank you and your organization, Artie, for honoring the men and women of our military who fight today in Afghanistan and in Iraq. You and I know—both know that they're carrying out this mission, a mission which will make America more secure and the world more free, with incredible courage and compassion and skill.

I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of these brave Americans. I will do—I will always honor their service. I will do everything in my power to ensure that they and their families receive the gratitude and respect of our great Nation.

It's a high honor, Artie, to serve as President of this great country. I work every day to be worthy of that honor. And I'm calling to tell you how much I appreciate the great faith you and your organization have placed in me by endorsing me for a second term.

Ride safe. May God bless you. May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thanks a lot.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. from the Residence at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Artie Muller, president, Mike Cobb, chairman of the board, Gary Sheffmeyer, vice president, and Preston B. "Jay" Fairlamb, second vice president, Rolling Thunder, Inc.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia May 31, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Welcome. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your great leadership as Secretary of Defense for our country. General Myers, members of the United States military, veterans, honored guests, and fellow Americans. This morning I had the honor of placing a wreath before the Tomb of the Unknowns. This custom is observed every Memorial Day on behalf of the American people as a mark of gratitude and respect.

And when this ceremony is concluded and all of us have gone on our way, the Honor Guard will keep watch over the tomb. Every hour of every day, on the coldest nights, in the hardest rain, there is a sentinel of the 3d U.S. Infantry standing guard. The soldiers entrusted with that duty count it a privilege. And today, as we reflect on the men and women who have died in the defense of America, all of us count it a privilege to be citizens of the country they served.

In the military tradition, no one is left behind on the field of battle. And our Nation is determined to account for all of the missing. The same spirit can be seen in the respect we show to each life laid down for this Nation. We receive them in sorrow, and we take them to an honored place to rest. At this and other cemeteries across our country and in cemeteries abroad where heroes fell, America acknowledges a debt that is beyond our power to repay.

This weekend, we dedicated the World War II Memorial, which will stand forever as a tribute to the generation that fought that war and the more than 400,000 Americans who fell. Some here today can turn their minds back across 60 years and see the face of a buddy who never made it home. You are veterans who have not forgotten your comrades, and America will al-

ways honor the achievements and the character of your brave generation.

Through our history, America has gone to war reluctantly because we have known the costs of war, and the war on terror we're fighting today has brought great costs of its own. Since the hour this Nation was attacked, we have seen the character of the men and women who wear our country's uniform. In places like Kabul and Kandahar, in Mosul and Baghdad, we have seen their decency and their brave spirit. Because of their fierce courage, America is safer; two terror regimes are gone forever; and more than 50 million souls now live in freedom.

Those who have fought these battles and served this cause can be proud of all they have achieved. And these veterans of battle will carry with them for all their days the memory of the ones who did not live to be called veterans. They will remember young soldiers like Captain Joshua Byers, a West Point man born in South Carolina who died in Iraq. When this son of missionaries was given command of a 120-man combat unit, he wrote this to his parents: "I will give the men everything I have to give. I love them already, just because they're mine. I pray with all my heart that I will be able to take every single one of them home safe when we finish our mission here."

Sergeant Major Michael Stack, who was laid to rest at Arlington, wore the uniform for 28 years and is remembered as a soldier's soldier. The sergeant major must have been quite a guy. When he was a young platoon sergeant, the recruits gave him a nickname, No Slack Billy Jack Stack. *[Laughter]* By all accounts, he was the kind of man you want in charge of a tough situation. And by the account of his mother, he finished his goodbyes with these words: "Mom, I'm going because I believe in what